



TheRide 2045

Current State and Future Context Summary

September 2021

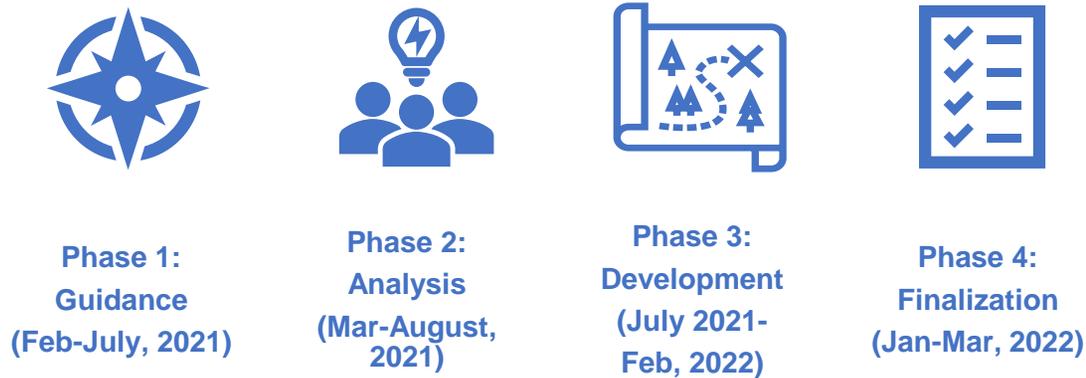
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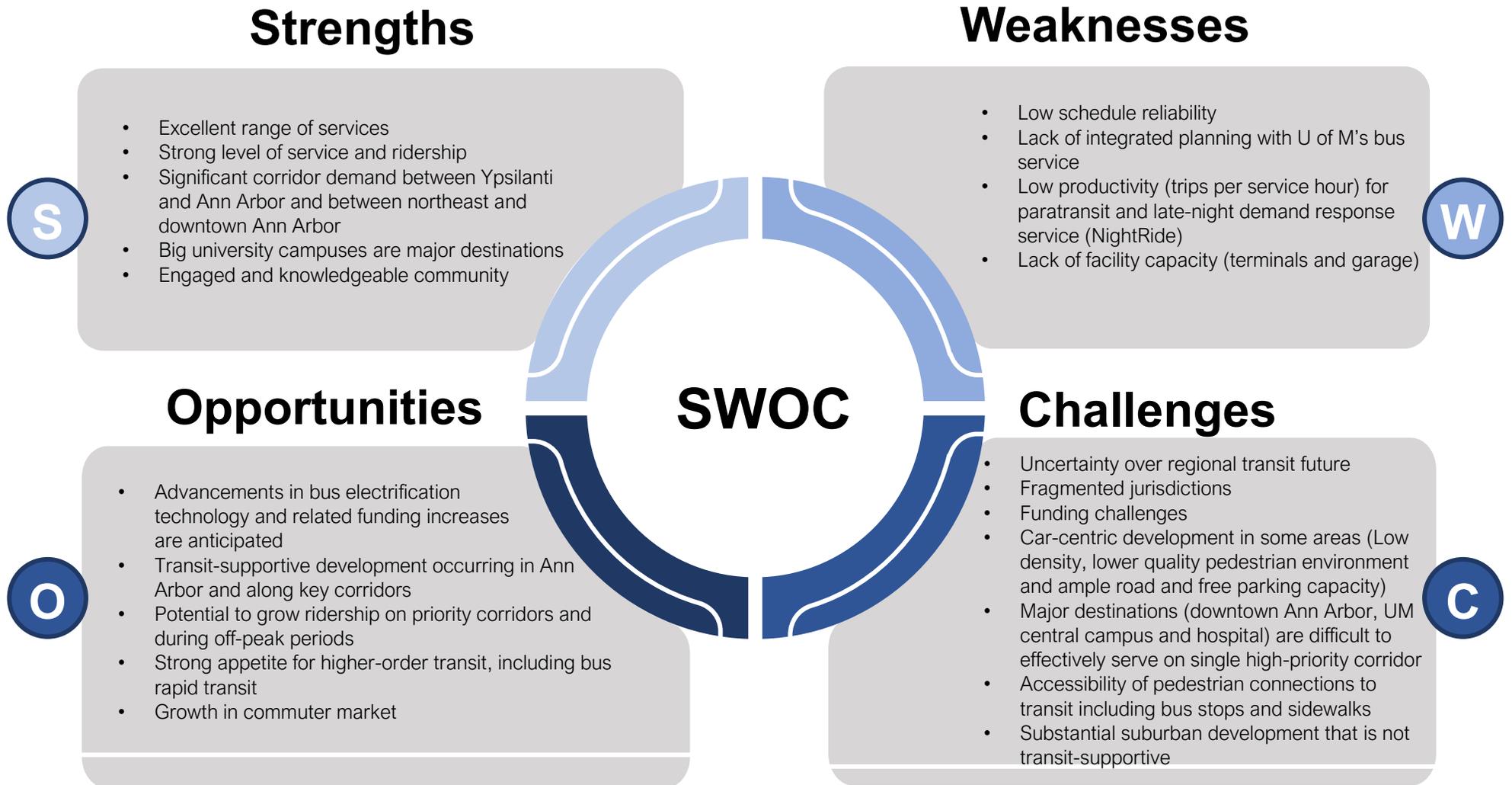
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1 - Summary

TheRide 2045 Long-Range Plan is a comprehensive and long-term vision for public transit in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area. Work on TheRide 2045 began with initial public and stakeholder engagement in Fall of 2019. Due to the pandemic, further work on the plan was delayed. The development of TheRide 2045 resumed in February 2021 and is expected to be completed in March 2022 using a four-phased approach illustrated below.



As part of the TheRide 2045 project, a current state and future context assessment was conducted to guide the development of the long-range plan. The following figure summarizes the key findings from the assessment. Overall, TheRide is performing strongly, with promising opportunities to build on over the next 25-years.



The following sections provide additional context around the current and future state for TheRide.

2 - Current State

TheRide has high levels of customer satisfaction, ridership and level of service for a transit agency of its size. Over the 10 years prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, service expanded significantly. Much of the growth was driven by an ambitious 5-Year Transit Improvement Plan in 2014 that received strong community support and allowed TheRide to provide service to more places, operate more hours, and at an increased frequency. As a result, when COVID-19 started TheRide covered a larger service area, longer service span, and more frequent services along key corridors with record ridership.

While service levels were increased, ridership also grew, albeit at a slower pace. The declining productivity (a key measure of service efficiency)

was expected and is in line with a declining national trend in ridership productivity. Although productivity declined, the successful implementation of the 2014 plan enabled TheRide to increase ridership at a time when ridership decreased nationally due to declining gas prices and the emergence of Transportation Network Companies (e.g., Uber, Lyft).

As with transit across the country, TheRide was hard hit by COVID-19. Ridership was dramatically impacted and a temporary service plan was put into place focusing on high use corridors and essential destinations. Earlier this year, TheRide re-introduced pre-pandemic levels of service, including adjustments to all routes and services. Initial data suggests ridership is beginning to return.

In addition to a strong fixed-route bus service, the AAATA provides a diverse array of services. Demand response services are undergoing a period of expansion and change in response to technological advances and changes in planning

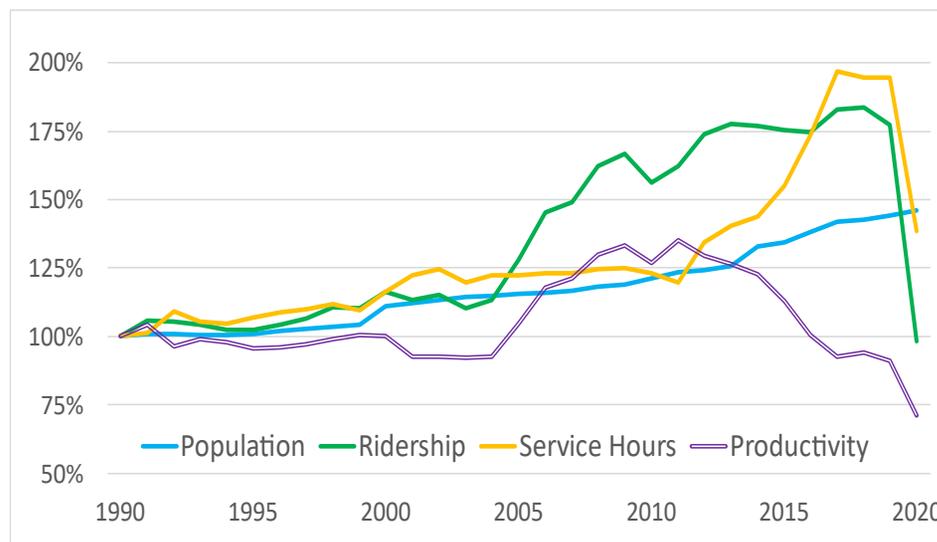


Figure 1 - AAATA Performance History – Source: TheRide

approaches. FlexRide has been used to replace low-demand fixed routes resulting in improved service quality and cost efficiency. Steps are also being made to improve the cost efficiency and service quality for A-Ride, GoldRide Demand Response and FlexRide – Night and Holiday service, which are relatively less cost-efficient compared to fixed route services.

Within the strong overall performance, various opportunities for improvement have been identified. These include high demand on certain corridors leading to overcrowding, low schedule reliability, some low productivity routes, and low levels of off-peak service. TheRide has been monitoring these issues and adjusting service to address them, and TheRide 2045 presents an opportunity to plan for adjustments to tackle them both in the near and long-term.

AAATA 2019 Ridership

The major source of ridership for TheRide is the University of Michigan Central Campus and downtown Ann Arbor. There is a large concentration of boardings at the Blake Transit Center and Ypsilanti Transit Center. Transfers represent a significant portion of these, confirming the important role that these locations play within the current and future network.

Secondary demand nodes are located at the southern end of Eastern Michigan University, Nixon Rd. and Plymouth Rd., the University of Michigan North Campus, Briarwood Mall, the Meijer on Carpenter Rd. and at Washtenaw Community College. Washtenaw Ave. provides the highest and most continuous ridership corridor in the area between two nodes in downtown Ann Arbor and downtown Ypsilanti. Another high ridership corridor lies between Plymouth/Nixon and Briarwood Mall and running north along State St. Both corridors also show high levels of ridership relative to service provided.

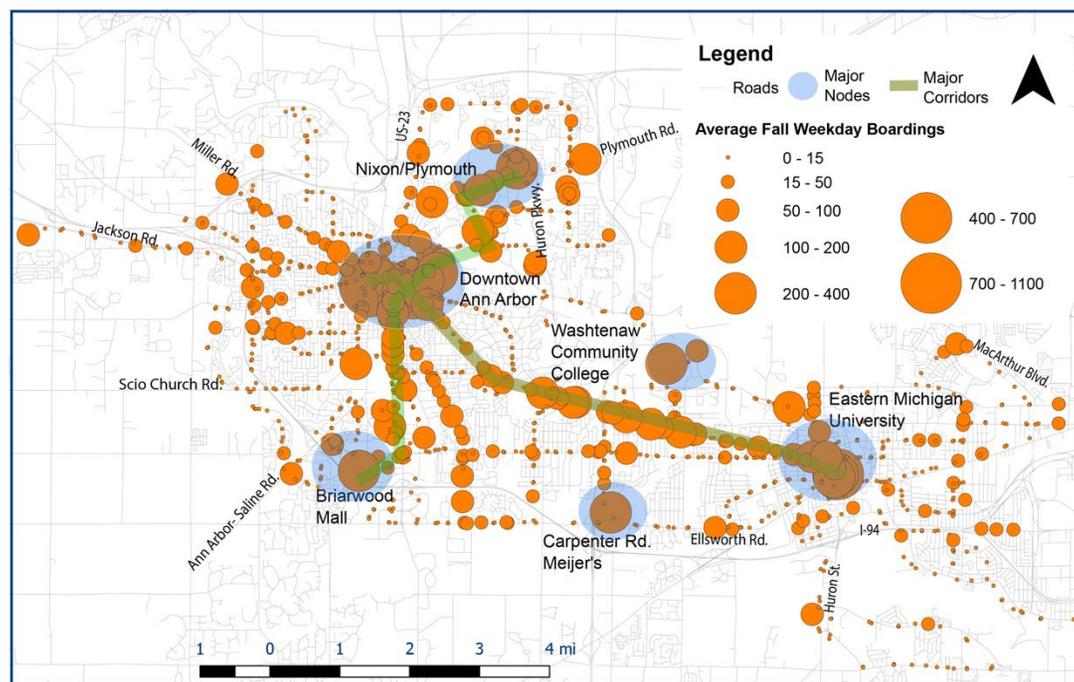


Figure 2 - AAATA 2019 Ridership – Source: TheRide

Washtenaw County Equity and Opportunities Map

The greatest equity challenges are located in the southeast service area for TheRide. While most of this area has good levels of service, the area lacks fast and direct travel to where people are going. This results in the correlation of low Opportunity Index scores (see figure) with longer trip lengths.

The Opportunity Index created by Washtenaw County and the City of Ann Arbor is a holistic measure of equity that incorporates unemployment, educational attainment, and African American population concentration. Inequity of service levels is apparent in several places within low Opportunity Index areas, notably areas within the City of Ypsilanti, eastern parts of Ypsilanti Township, and southern parts of Superior Township. Improving direct and fast service to these areas would improve connectivity and access to opportunities for residents in this area and will be considered by TheRide 2045.

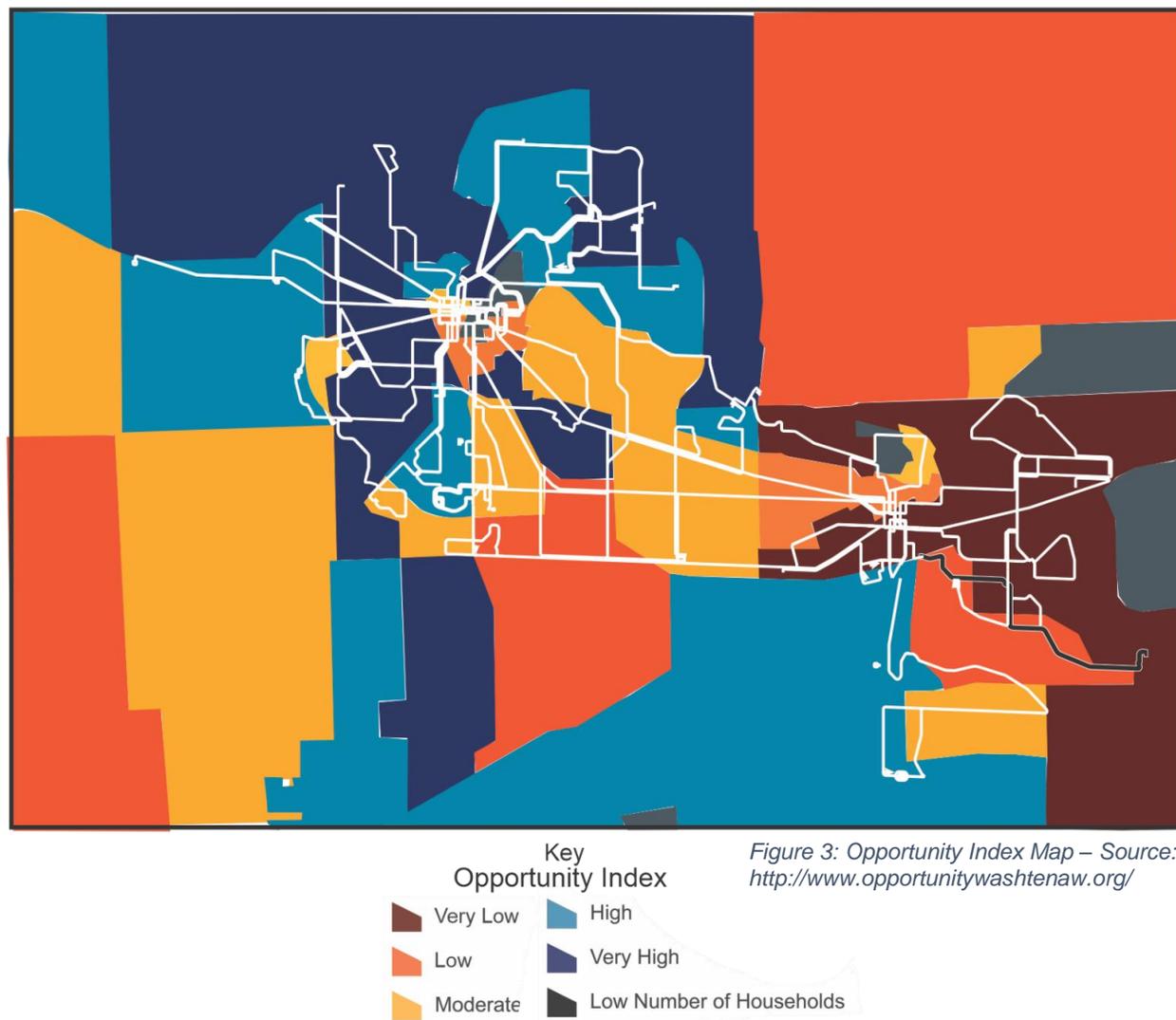


Figure 3: Opportunity Index Map – Source: <http://www.opportunitywashtenaw.org/>

3 - Future State

The Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area is a dynamic region with diverse municipalities. The next 25 years will see moderate levels of change to the area, including growth to the population and employment in the area. While employment growth will be focused in the urban centers, population growth will be distributed through a combination of suburban sprawl as well as key urban destinations (including around University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University campuses).

Municipalities in the region have all committed themselves toward creating communities that are more sustainable, resilient and vibrant. In some cases, these are accompanied with transit-supportive plans to create more livable communities – aspiring to improve densities, improve pedestrian access, and introduce parking constraints in certain areas. As a result, transit will continue to play a vital role in supporting the economic, environmental, and equity goals of the area.

Population growth and employment growth are the two most significant factors used to forecast future transit demand. Demographic variables around age, income, employment type, etc. were also considered in developing transit demand forecasts, as were municipal plans around transportation and urban development.

The most significant growth in transit demand (relative to pre-COVID-19 numbers) is projected to occur in:

- downtown Ann Arbor,
- along the Plymouth Rd. corridor and
- at the two University of Michigan campuses.

Good growth is also expected at the W. Stadium/Liberty/Jackson, Washtenaw/Huron, Carpenter/Ellsworth nodes and along State St. Elsewhere, strong transit demand growth is projected to occur around Eastern Michigan University and along the Washtenaw Corridor.

The following sections provide additional detail regarding key factors that have been considered in forecasting transit demand, and how these factors change in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area over the next 25 years.

Population and Employment Growth

	Population Growth 2020-2045		Employment Growth 2020-2045	
	Percent Growth	Absolute Growth	Percent Growth	Absolute Growth
Ann Arbor City	8.7%	10,500	9.6%	12,750
Ann Arbor Township	12.7%	1,000	11.6%	1,250
Ypsilanti City	6.8%	1,500	9.8%	1,250
Ypsilanti Township	11.0%	6,000	10.0%	1,750
Pittsfield Township	32.6%	13,750	13.8%	3,750
Scio Township	33.3%	6,500	10.5%	1,500
Superior Township	42.1%	5,750	6.8%	750
Total	15.8%	45,000	10.1%	23,000

Figure 4: Population and Employment Growth - Source: SEMCOG Regional Forecast

The rate of population growth increase is most significant in suburban township areas. However, strong growth is expected in urban areas for absolute population. Specific growth areas of note include:

- Downtown Ann Arbor,
- Plymouth Rd.,
- Superior Township east of Leforge Rd. and south of Geddes Rd.,
- the area around Carpenter/Ellsworth Rds.,
- the area around W. Michigan Ave./ W. Textile Rd., and
- the area around Packard Rd./Eisenhower Pkwy.

Adjacent to Washtenaw County, significant growth is expected in western Canton Township. Moderate growth is also expected in southeastern Livingston County and southwestern Oakland County.

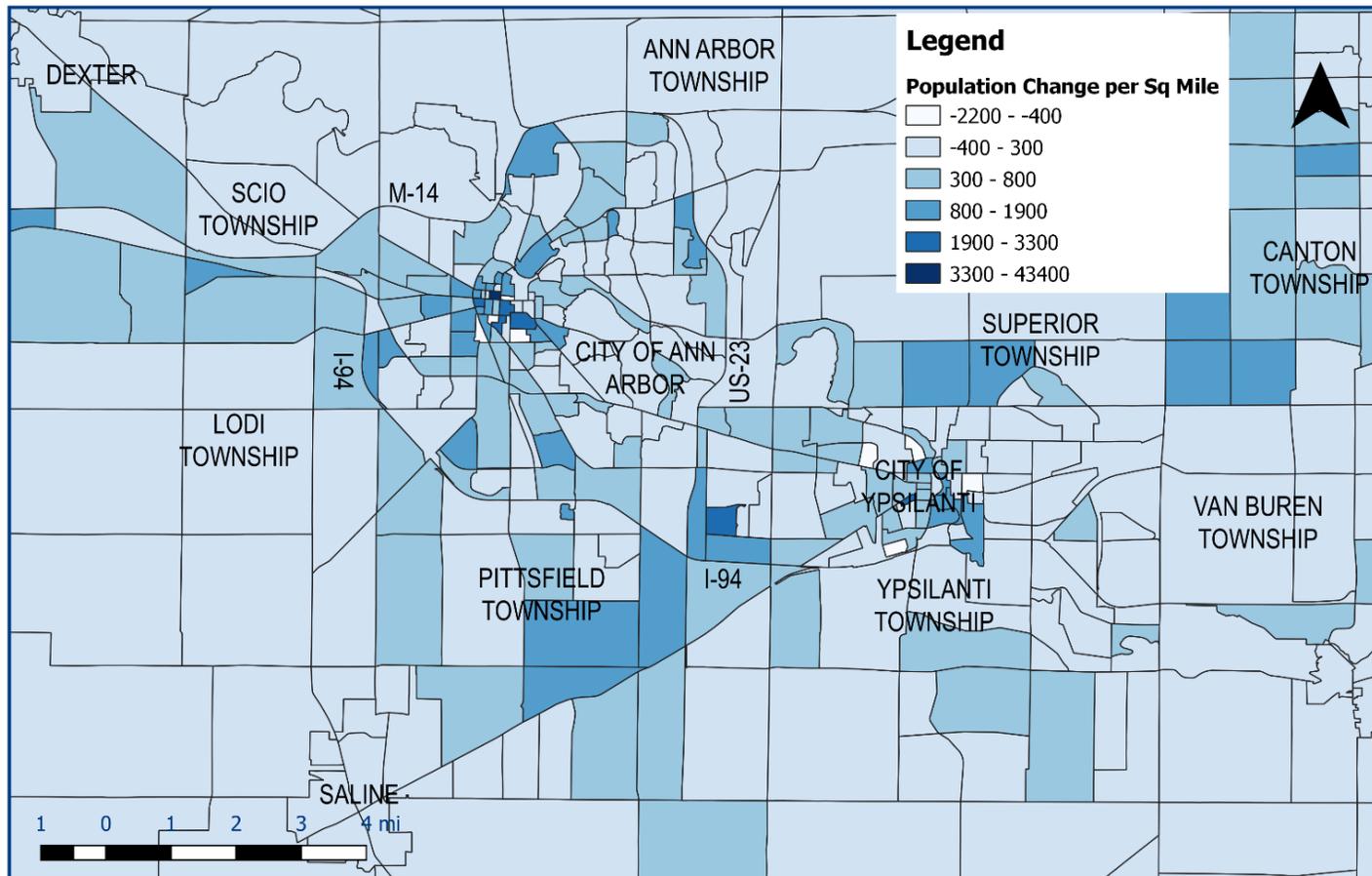


Figure 5 - Population Growth Map – Source: SEMCOG Regional Forecast

Employment growth is projected to have a far more urban focus. The University of Michigan campuses and downtown Ann Arbor will be the predominant drivers of employment growth. From a corridor perspective, projected employment growth aligns well along a linear route between Plymouth/US-23 and State St./I-94. Washtenaw Ave. east of US-23 is another area of notable projected employment growth.

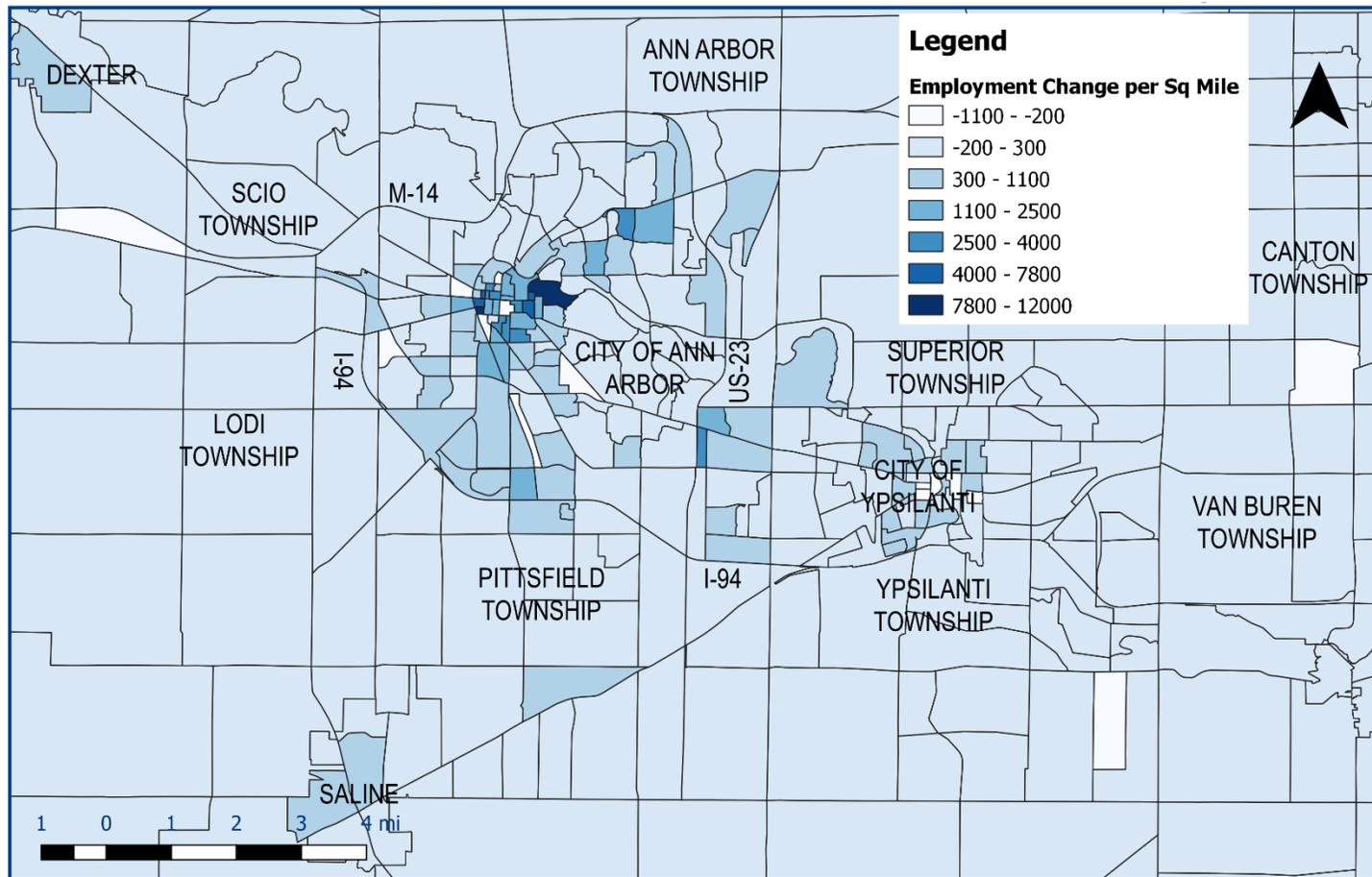


Figure 6 - Employment Growth Map – Source: SEMCOG Regional Forecast

Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Area Travel Patterns 2045

Travel between the City of Ann Arbor and Pittsfield is forecast to be the most significant inter-municipal flow in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Area, which aligns with significant growth in both. Area travel in general is focused on the City of Ann Arbor with large flows between the City of Ann Arbor and Scio and Ypsilanti Townships, and notable flows between the City of Ann Arbor and all area municipalities. In assessing forecast travel flows within municipalities, travel between downtown and northeast Ann Arbor forms the dominant travel pattern. Other specific hubs of travel flows with many trips from several areas include the University of Michigan North campus, Nixon/Plymouth, Briarwood Mall, Eastern Michigan University, Washtenaw Ave. adjacent to US-23 and Carpenter/Ellsworth.

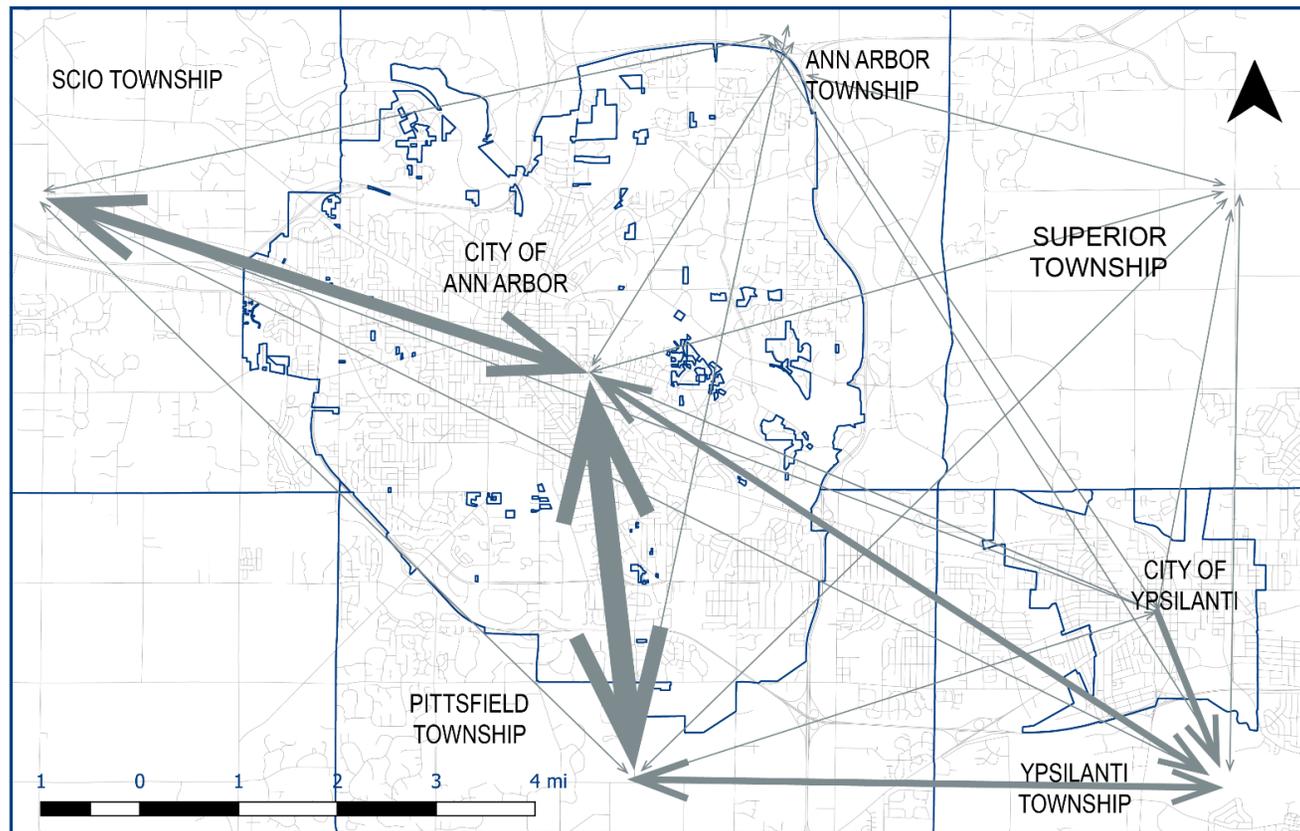


Figure 7 - Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Area Travel Patterns 2045 – Source: SEMCOG Travel Forecast

Regional Travel Patterns 2045

Regional travel (highlighted in Figure 8) will continue to be a significant factor in the broader transportation context for the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area, with the following notable highlights:

- Travel between the Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti area and east (Canton Township, Dearborn, Detroit) is anticipated to continue to be the main flow by a significant margin. Canton Township is the dominant origin-destination within this Wayne County travel flow.
- Travel between the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Area and southeast (Van Buren Township, Romulus Township) and southwest (Saline, Lodi Township) are projected to be other notable regional flows.
- Within the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti Area, the City of Ann Arbor is projected to be the dominant demand point for regional travel. Northern travel is almost exclusively to the City of Ann Arbor and is projected to have strong proportional growth.
- There are also sizable travel flows between Wayne County and the City of Ypsilanti and Townships of Pittsfield and Ypsilanti.

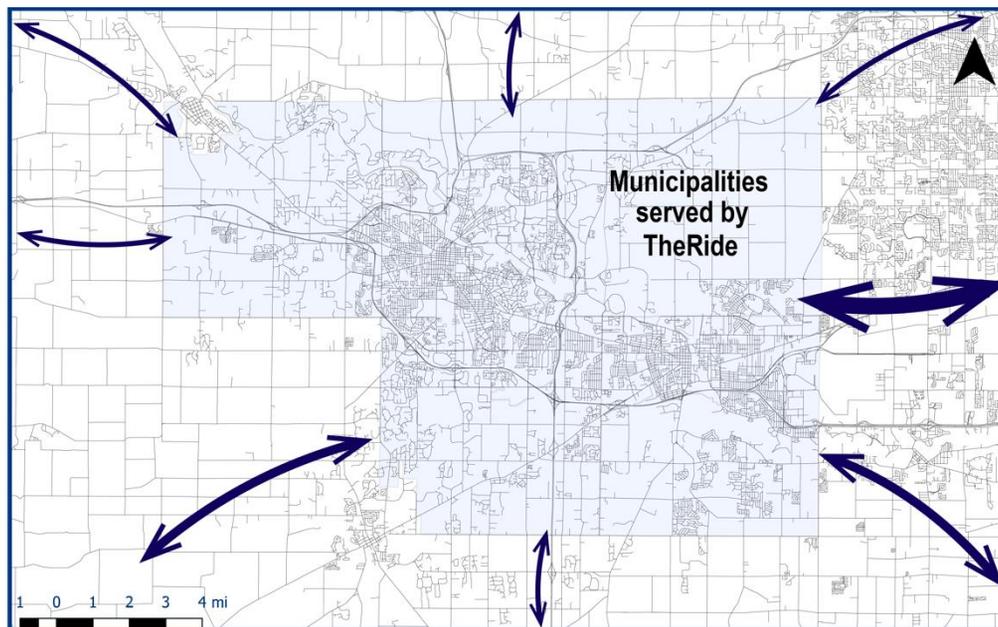


Figure 8 - Regional Travel Patterns 2045 – Source: SEMCOG Travel Forecast

Urban Structure and Transportation Context

Transit supportive land use and built infrastructure conditions have a significant impact on future transit demand. Elements such as the availability of free parking, density, compactness, active transportation connectivity, the quality of active transportation environment and roadway design and capacity have all been shown to significantly influence transit ridership and transit sustainability.

Planning in the City of Ann Arbor places a significant priority towards transit supportive policies, development and infrastructure as compared to other municipalities in the region. Future ridership demand in the city is projected to exceed what would be expected considering only demographic changes. Transit-supportive changes are expected to be particularly strong in the four new Zoning District for Transit Corridors:

- Plymouth/Nixon
- State/Eisenhower
- W. Stadium/Liberty/Jackson
- Washtenaw/Huron

The Washtenaw Ave. corridor has strong transit-supportive plans across all corridors. Conversely, new subdivision growth on the urban periphery will be considerably less transit supportive than infill growth within existing urban areas.

COVID-19 Related Trends

The COVID-19 pandemic has added significant uncertainty to transit planning. It is expected that increased telecommuting rates, safety fears, an increase in private car purchases and more dispersed housing purchases will have negative impacts on transit in the near term. However, stagnant incomes, increasing inequality and greater mode share of active forms of transportation will positively affect ridership. Taking all of this into account, it is likely that the former factors will prove more influential in the short-term.

Due to the pandemic, we expect several other trip taking patterns to change. The number of longer commutes is anticipated to decrease per capita as more people work from home. Furthermore, their longer commute trips could translate to more frequent, shorter trips. This is due to the additional time that has been gained from their previous commute that could be

used for retail and leisure uses. As work/school commutes are generally concentrated in peak periods, it is expected that there will be less peaking of travel demand.

This short-term outlook is much closer to pre-pandemic conditions as compared to the pandemic conditions. This will be the case even more so when looking at ridership, travel patterns and expectations in general over the 25 years.

4 - Conclusions

TheRide effectively provides transit services in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area, and, prior to COVID-19, was experiencing record high levels of ridership for the agency. Community support and investment resulted in strong performance, exemplified through high customer satisfaction, levels of service, and the aforementioned ridership. COVID-19 has dramatically impacted service and ridership nationwide, including in the Ann Arbor-Ypsilanti area.

Moderate growth in employment and population and an increasing focus on more sustainable development and transportation is expected to drive transit demand growth over the next 25 years. The most significant growth in transit demand is projected to occur in downtown Ann Arbor, along the Plymouth Rd. corridor and at the two University of Michigan campuses. Reasonable growth is anticipated to also occur at the W. Stadium/Liberty/Jackson, Washtenaw/Huron, Carpenter/Ellsworth nodes and along State St. within the City of Ann Arbor. Elsewhere, strong transit demand growth is projected to occur around Eastern Michigan University and along the Washtenaw Ave. Corridor.

As society rebounds from COVID-19, TheRide must build from the successes of the past but with a view to the future. TheRide 2045 Long-Range Plan is intended to serve as a strategic roadmap for organizational decision-making and planning. The plan must be built to capitalize on the opportunities and address the challenges identified through the current state and future state. It will focus service growth and investment to the areas and corridors that will most effectively meet the future needs of the community.